

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 6323

EXDIS

FROM MAYNES

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PLAB, ILO

SUBJ: ILO - EGYPTIAN OFFER

REF: STATE 174001

1. WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, I BELIEVE DEPARTMENT HAS MISSED THE POINT OF REFTEL. TONE OF DEPARTMENT'S CABLE SUGGESTS IT ALMOST UPSET AT PROSPECT THAT GOE PROPOSAL DESCRIBED REFTEL MAY REPRESENT "TOTAL REVERSAL ITS ACTIONS PRIOR TO AND AT 63RD ILC". INSTEAD OF SEESING ANY SUCH "REVERSAL" AS AN UNEXPECTED OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE, IT APPEARS TO QUESTION ANY NEW GOE POSITION AS STEP THAT "RAISES CREDIBILITY PROBLEM".

2. IF HE WISHES, AMBASSADOR EILTS MAY WISH TO COMMENT ON TONE OF OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH FAHMY IN CAIRO, BUT MY CLEAR IMPRESSION IS THAT EGYPTIANS WERE SIGNALING TO US THEY WANTED TO BE OF HELP IN FINDING A LAST MINUTE SOLUTION. I ACKNOWLEDGE AS QUICKLY AS ANYONE
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THAT TIME IS SHORT, THAT EGYPTIAN HELP MAY NOT BE SUFFICIENT, AND THAT OUR AGENDA MAY NOT BE THEIRS. BUT I HOPE WE DO NOT RESPOND TO ALL DIPLOMATIC OPENINGS FROM THE EGYPTIANS BY STATING AS WE DO IN THIS CASE THAT: "IF OFFER TO HELP US GENUINE, GOE PRESUMABLY WILL DO SOMETHING TO IMPLEMENT IT."

3. AS DEPARTMENT POINTS OUT, GOVERNING BODY AUTHORIZES MEETINGS OF WORKING PARTY ON STRUCTURE (WPS) AND HAS CALLED FOR MEETING OCTOBER 31-NOVEMBER 4 OR ONLY FEW DAYS BEFORE WE ARE SCHEDULED TO WITHDRAW FROM ILO. ONE WAY TO LOOK AT EGYPTIAN SUGGESTION THEREFORE IS THAT THE WPS MEETING OCCURS TOO LATE FOR ANYTHING NOW TO BE DONE. ANOTHER MIGHT BE TO ASK WHETHER MEMBERS OF WPS COULD NOT BEGIN THEIR WORK INFORMALLY, LONG BEFORE THE FORMAL MEETING BUT IN TIME FOR US TO KNOW WHETHER PROGRESS CAN BE MADE AT THE SCHEDULED MEETING.

4. IT IS TRUE, AS DEPT POINTS OUT, THAT EGYPT "SPEARHEADED" OPPOSITION TO US ON ARTICLE 17 REFORM IN JUNE 1977 CONFERENCE. NEVERTHELESS, I SEE NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD DOUBT, WITHOUT EXPLORING FURTHER, OFFER OF COUNTRY TO BE OF MORE HELP IN THE FUTURE THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST. TRUTH IS THAT SEVERAL DEVELOPING COUNTRIES APPEAR FINALLY TO REALIZE WHAT THEY DID IN JUNE 1977. TODAY THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR TOLD ME BOTH ALGERIA AND SYRIA HAVE EXPRESSED DISMAY TO HIM OVER THE RESULTS OF JUNE 1977. IF EXPLORATION PROVES THIS TO BE A TRUE GENERAL FEELING, ARE WE TO TELL THE LDCS THAT THEY MISSED THEIR CHANCE IN JUNE OR ARE WE TO TRY TO WORK OUT AN ACCEPTABLE COMPROMISE?
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5. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH THE DEPT IS CONCERNED THE CONCESSIONS THE EGYPTIANS WISH WOULD BRING THE GOVERNING BODY UNDER THE CONTROL OF A COALITION OF "COMMUNIST" AND "ARAB ACTIVISTS", WE CANNOT KNOW THIS BECAUSE THE EGYPTIANS HAVE MADE NO DETAILED PROPOSALS. THEY HAVE OFFERED TO BE OF HELP. THEY WANT TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE WITH US; AND ON THIS SCORE, I WOULD POINT OUT THAT MY DISCUSSIONS IN GENEVA SUGGEST MUCH MORE FLEXIBILITY THAN WE THOUGHT AMONG WESTERN DELEGATIONS ON THE STRUCTURE ISSUE. IT IS THE ONE SINGLE POINT THEY ALL MAKE. THE WEST CAN MAKE PROGRESS ON ITS AGENDA IF IT SHOWS SOME "IMAGINATION" ON THE STRUCTURE ISSUE BUT WITHOUT CONCEDING ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES SUCH AS TRIPARTISM ETC. IN THIS REGARD, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT IF THE TRADE FOR REFORMS IN THE GOVERNING BODY IS MORE PROTECTION FOR DUE PROCESS IN THE OVERALL WORK OF THE ILO, THIS WILL INEVITABLY HAVE AN IMPACT ON OUR VIEWS ABOUT CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION AND POWERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY.

6. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, I THEREFORE STRONGLY
RECOMMEND WE NOT TAKE A PASSIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE
PROPOSAL DESCRIBED IN THE REFTTEL, BUT BEGIN
CONSIDERING WHAT KIND OF COMPROMISE PACKAGE MIGHT BE
ACCEPTABLE. NOTHING, REPEAT NOTHING, MAY COME OF
THE EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL. A MAJOR PROBLEM CLEARLY IS
THE SHORTNESS OF TIME (ALTHOUGH BILL VANDEN HEUVEL'S
VERY CREATIVE PROPOSAL COULD BUY MORE). BUT IF
NOTHING COMES OF THE EGYPTIANS OFFER, THEN WE WILL
BE NO WORSE OFF THAN WE ARE NOW, FACING AS WE DO
WITHDRAWAL IN NOVEMBER. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE
EGYPTIANS ARE SERIOUS, WE MAY HAVE SAVED OURSELVES
FROM A MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY DILEMMA. VANDEN HEUVEL

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